

FACTS ABOUT ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Alzheimer's disease is the most common type of dementia in the elderly, affecting over four million Americans.

Symptoms of Alzheimer's Disease

Patients with Alzheimer's disease go through several stages with progressively worsening symptoms

- First symptoms—mild confusion, insignificant forgetfulness or problems with recall, difficulty finding the right words
- Mild/early Alzheimer's disease—worsening confusion, difficulty managing finances or keeping house, difficulty remembering recent events
- Moderate Alzheimer's disease—loss of independent function, frequent disorientation, worsening memory loss of further distant events
- Severe Alzheimer's disease—loss of ability to independently perform basic activities of daily living (bathing, dressing, toileting), memory loss and confusion extending to inability to recognize loved ones and inability to comprehend what is going on around the patient
- Patients in the late stage of the disease may lose the ability to walk or speak coherently and often become agitated, paranoid or delusional.

Treatment Options

- Not effective: Estrogen, NSAIDs (ibuprofen, naproxen, Celebrex, etc.), selegiline
- Possibly effective, further study needed:
 - Gingko—products are not usually standardized in the U.S., so you cannot be sure what you are getting, may cause bleeding complications when combined with certain medications or medical procedures
 - Vitamin E—high doses used in studies often cause stomach upset, may cause bleeding complications when combined with certain medications

- Approved for use:

- Aricept (donepezil)—start at 5 mg daily, increase to 10 mg daily after one month. May cause stomach upset. Approved for mild-moderate disease.
- Exelon (rivastigmine)—start at 1.5 mg twice daily, increase slowly to 6 to 12 mg twice daily. May cause stomach upset. Approved for mild-moderate disease. Recommended to take with food.
- Reminyl (galantamine)—start at 4 mg twice daily, increase slowly to 16-24 mg twice daily. May cause stomach upset. Approved for mild-moderate disease. Recommended to be taken with food.
- Namenda (memantine)—start at 5 mg daily, increase slowly to 10 mg twice daily. May cause drowsiness and constipation. Approved for moderate to severe disease, commonly combined with Aricept, Exelon or Reminyl.
- It is important to note that none of the treatment options tested so far cure Alzheimer's disease, but only slow its progression.
- Clinical trials have demonstrated that stopping therapy without the direction of a physician can result in irreversible progression of the disease.
- Please see your pharmacist if you have questions on the prescription or over-the-counter treatment options for Alzheimer's disease.

*Want to know more?
Ask your pharmacist!*

